

HOW TO PITCH BASEBALL

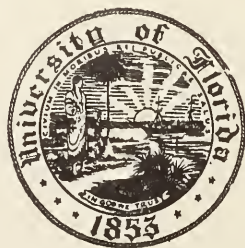
BY
LEW PONSECA

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HOW TO PITCH BASEBALL





Lew Fonseca, once the 'most valuable player' in the American League.

HOW TO PITCH BASEBALL

by

LEW FONSECA

*Former Manager
Chicago White Sox*

42-13965

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This book is dedicated to the thousands upon thousands of youngsters in our country now playing baseball on sandlots, others in high schools, colleges and universities in whose hands the future of the great national game of baseball rests. May they carry baseball forward another one hundred years to the sound of the crack of the bat, the slide for the bag with spikes flashing in the sun, amid the roar of millions of fans.



F O R E W O R D

Every kid who ever plays baseball wants to be a pitcher. It's only natural. On the sandlot that is a badge of supremacy. The lad who can talk the fastest or get there first is the pitcher. No ballplayer who ever reached the heights escaped the period when he was "the pitcher" of his ball club. He may learn that pitching is his rightful position. More often than not, however, he will find that his forte is elsewhere.

Pitching without a doubt is baseball's citadel. It is in the middle of the diamond that pennants are won and lost. I, too, was a kid pitcher. I had ambitions to follow in the footsteps of Christy Mathewson. But circumstances decreed otherwise. It was a gloomy day for me when the manager of our team said: "To the outfield, Fonseca; we need your hitting power."

All baseball players are pitchers at heart, just as all football players are quarterbacks. So in writing this book on how to pitch, I know my audience will be not only pitchers, or those with ambitions to become pitchers, but everyone who is interested in this grand game of baseball.

As a major league player of fifteen seasons, as a manager for several years, and in my capacity as maker of a full-length talking picture for the American League each year, I have made a deep study of the art of pitching. I have talked for hours with the game's greatest pitchers. What I have learned from them I pass on to you, hoping that it will be a helpful guide as you strive for baseball success.

LEW FONSECA



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Part One
**PITCHING AND
BASEBALL**



1. The Game of Baseball

BASEBALL, a mountainous fellow basking in the sunshine of popular favor for more than a hundred years, has trodden the beaten path from one end of the world to the other.

It has flourished while wars—the Civil, the Spanish-American, and the World conflicts—raged. Through times of stress, even panics, it has rolled on. More than that, it has been a psychological aid during troublous times. The worries and cares of modern life are lost when a fan sits down in his seat—box or bleacher—to watch his favorites play, and to yell at player or umpire.

The President of the United States each year tosses out the first ball in baseball's inaugural game in Washington. Most of this land's Chief Executives have been baseball fans. Baseball is an American institution as much as the Saturday night bath of the olden days, the barber shop, or the corner filling station.

Newspapers publish sports extras to tell eager readers the story of the day's drama on the baseball field. Radios bring the baseball game into the homes of



The President of the United States tosses out the first ball each year.

millions. Baseball is a lively topic everywhere that men and women meet. Pop and Sonny stage terrific arguments nightly over the merits or demerits of their respective favorites.

Baseball stands for vigor, assurance in oneself, intelligence, and sportsmanship. One must indeed be thick-skinned to play the game successfully. It is a democratic game, a game where players learn how to take it. Part of the strategy is to unnerve the pitcher or batter. Woe indeed to the youngster who is unable to keep a clear head when rival players turn the verbal heat on him. Some ball clubs carry coaches whose main duty is to upset the other team with cutting jibes during the height of battle.

And the hot spot of baseball is out there in the center of the diamond—the pitcher's mound. More than with anyone else, responsibility for victory or defeat lies with the pitcher. His is the sternest task of any of the nine players. But before we go on with pitching, let us run over the game of baseball as a whole. The following two chapters discuss the other players and the game as a whole.

2. *The Rest of the Team*

PERHAPS you feel that you have the principal plays of baseball clearly in mind. Experience, however, has shown that it is better to take nothing for granted and to explain carefully the general trends of the game and the functions of the other members of the team before considering just how the pitcher works with his teammates.

The Diamond

The layout of the playing field varies slightly with the individual ball park, but in general the following conditions prevail.

The home plate, the only five-sided base on the field, is located about 30 yards from one corner of the field. This plate is at the apex of an angle formed by two base lines. On each of these base lines at a distance of 90 feet from the home plate is located a base. That on the right base line is first base; the other, third base. The pitcher's box is 60 feet 6 inches from the home plate on an imaginary line which bisects

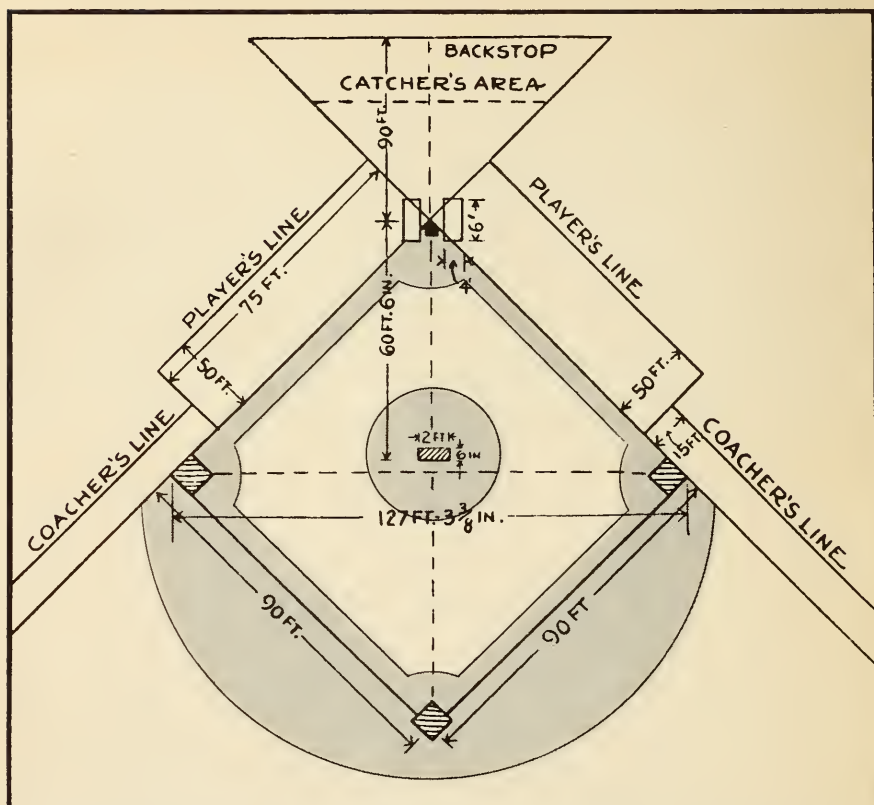


Diagram showing a baseball diamond and location of various parts.

the angle formed by the two base lines already mentioned. The pitcher's box is 24 inches long and 6 inches wide. One hundred twenty-seven feet $3\frac{3}{8}$ inches from the home plate on the same imaginary line is second base. It is connected by two base lines with the first and third bases respectively. Each of the bases except home plate is a white canvas bag 15 inches square and filled with sand. The base lines are indicated with chalk.

The area enclosed within the base lines is termed the infield, while that between first and third bases beyond the base lines connecting first and second, and



Compare this view of White Sox Park with diagram opposite.

second and third bases respectively is known as the outfield. The infield is frequently referred to as the diamond, although sometimes this name is loosely applied to the entire playing field.

The fan-shaped territory between those base lines which connect home plate with first and third bases (these base lines being considered as extended to the outer limits of the playing field) is fair; the portions of the field outside of the fan are foul. A batted ball which goes into foul territory is foul; otherwise it is fair.

Baseball is played by two teams of nine men each. The teams take turns batting, the period in which both teams have a chance at bat being called an inning. Nine full innings normally constitute a game, but if the team which would play the last half of the ninth inning has more runs at the end of the eighth than the other team has at the end of the first half of the ninth, the second half of the ninth inning is not played.

If the score is even at the end of the ninth, additional innings are played until one team is ahead at

the end of an inning, or until the game must be terminated because of darkness or storm. A game ending because of either of the last two reasons is termed "drawn."

The Batter

Special attention must be devoted to batting, because the pitcher comes to bat with the rest of the team.

Players usually come to bat in a regular order. The batter stands within one of two parallelograms 6 feet long and 4 feet wide which are situated one on each side of home plate. If he bats the ball when he is not in one of the parallelograms (which are called the batter's boxes), he is declared to be out.

The proper distance from the plate is important. If he stands too close, he is likely to hit the ball on the handle of the bat. If he is too far away, he will be unable to reach balls that go over the outside corner of the plate. A distance of approximately 12 inches from the plate is best.

The batter reaches first base in any of the following circumstances: if he makes a *base hit* (bats a ball into fair territory so that it isn't caught or picked up and thrown to first base before he is safe on the base); if the pitcher throws four *balls* (that is, bad throws) and the batter strikes at none of them; if a ball hits the batter (unless the umpire declares that the batsman did not try to get out of the way); if the catcher fails to hold the third strike and the batter can reach first base before the catcher has thrown the ball to the first baseman so that the latter can touch the base while he has the ball; or if a fielder makes one of certain misplays.

If a batter swings at a ball but fails to hit it, or

The batter's position should be a natural one. Arms free, away from the body; bat over rear shoulder and kept there until after the first short step. Too tight a grip locks the wrist and muscles of the forearm.



if he does not try to hit a pitch which the umpire judges good, it is a strike. If the batter hits a ball but it goes into foul territory, it is a foul. Until a batter has two strikes on him, fouls are declared to be strikes, but a foul cannot constitute the third strike.

Three strikes make the batter out, and three outs terminates one team's turn at bat for one inning.

Position at the Plate

In batting, in order that a free swing may be possible, the arms should be held away from the body before the pitch is made. Point the bat upward over

the rear shoulder before starting the swing. Eliminate the back swing. Pick up speed on the swing and let it go forward to meet the pitch. At the finish, apply a great deal of effort with your arms and wrists.

The bat should be gripped firmly, but not too tightly because that would tighten the wrist and forearm muscles.

Most of the weight should remain on the rear foot until the ball has been hit. This makes for better hitting against curve balls. A short stride of about 12 inches will help to give proper timing.

A level swing means plenty of line drives which will fall between the infielders and outfielders. Hit the ball where it is pitched; don't attempt to determine where it will go.

The follow-through is important. Instead of stopping the swing when the bat hits the ball, swing right through with a body pivot ending with the body turned halfway around and the weight on the toe of the rear foot. This follow-through adds distance and spread to the drive.

Things to Remember

Remain in position at the plate when a curve ball is pitched. Reach out toward the ball with your arms, and hit it after the break.

Hold the stride back; then hit the ball as hard as you can.

Don't move the bat much before the pitch is released. A little up-and-down motion gives enough play.

Be ready for every pitch, but make sure the ball is over the plate.

Keep your head still and your eye on both the ball and the pitcher.



At the plate: Some batters like the crouching stance (A) with the knees somewhat flexed and the body leaning forward. This crowds the plate, and gives the pitcher less space to shoot at. As in pitching, the stride is important (B). The first short step is taken with the forward foot before the bat starts to swing. Weight is on the rear foot until the bat connects. Follow-throw (C) is as vital in batting as in everything else. The body pivots and the bat hits through the ball as if it weren't there. Most of the weight now shifts forward.

Bunting

The bunt is an emergency form of batting. It is used by a batter in order to place base-runners in position where they are likely to score. The batter is usually put out, but his teammates have more chance of getting home. Bunting pays only when there are runners on bases and either no outs or only one out.

In bunting the bat is kept parallel with the ground and at right angles to the direction of flight of the ball, and is advanced slightly to meet the ball. To be



The drag bunt is made from the left side of the plate. The batter takes a step lead as the pitch comes; ball goes between first and the mound.



The closed-stance bunt is used by most big-league batters because it doesn't tip off the pitcher or the infielders that a bunt is on the way. After the ball has been thrown, the forward foot moves to the side a short half-step. The bat is moved parallel with the ground as the upper hand slides forward on it.

The open-stance bunt is a somewhat safer way to be sure of getting the bat out in front of the ball, but it gives away the intention of the batter, and the pitcher may have time to change his throw to a high inside ball, which is very hard for a bunter to knock down.



buntable, the ball must be over the plate. It is never safe to try to bunt high fast balls, as they are easily popped up in the air.

Base Running

Running bases is an important part of the batter's task. Your hits do not affect the final score until you have made the circuit of the bases. The bases must be touched in order.

As soon as you have batted a fair ball, you must start for first base. You may go further if you wish to. Once you have given indications of an intention to go on to second base, however, you cannot return to first base. After you have reached first base, a fielder may tag you out with the ball unless you are touching



Run out every batted ball. Never assume you are out till umpire rules.



Hook slide: Keep front knee bent and foot raised so spikes won't catch.

a base. If a fair or foul ball hit by a batter on your side is caught on the fly, you must retouch your base.

If you are on first base when a teammate hits a fair ground ball, you must run to second. You are not forced to run on a fly hit.

If the bases are loaded when a hit is made, all the runners are forced to go to the next base. A fielder may then put out a runner by touching the next base with the ball before he reaches it. He does not have to touch the runner.

If a batter is given a base on balls, a runner on first may advance to second base in safety.

Double or triple plays are made when two or three players are put out when runners are forced off bases.

Sliding

When base-runners are in danger of being tagged

out, they often slide to the next base. It is more difficult for a fielder to catch a ball and at the same time stoop to tag a sliding man than it is for him to touch a player who is running to a base in an upright position.

Two types of slides are in general use at the present time. If you slide straight into the base, you are more likely to be tagged out. Slide on the side of your leg so that your spikes will not catch in the ground.

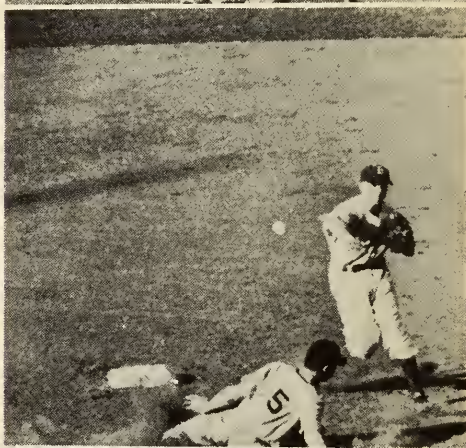
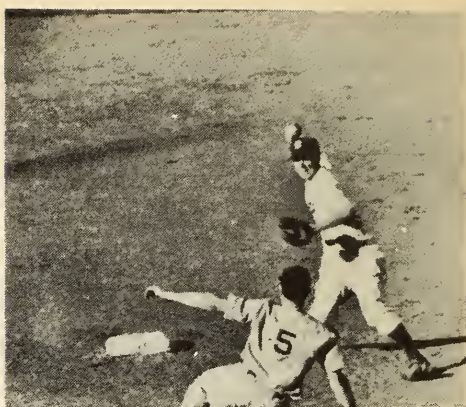
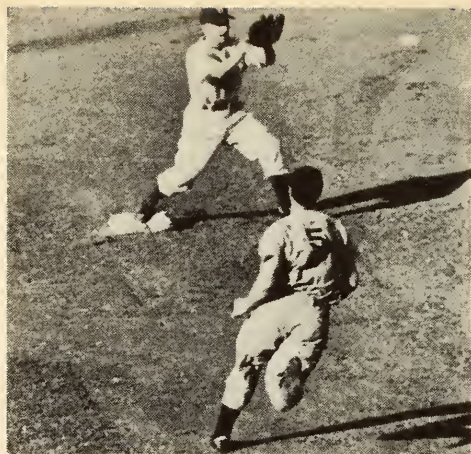
The hook slide is more used now. You slide to the side of the base away from the infielder. Do not hit the ground too close to the base; this causes many injuries. Keep your front knee bent and the foot raised from the ground.

3. *The Team in the Field*

WHEN a team's turn at bat comes to an end and it takes its place in the field, there comes a change in the relationships of the players, and a high degree of specialization is required. Just because you are a pitcher, you must not get the idea that you are the whole team. You are a very important part of the group, but each of the others has his own necessary contribution to make to the game. You will be able to cooperate better with your teammates if you understand the function of each of them.

The Catcher

While the team is fielding, the catcher is in command. He has a great deal more to do than merely to catch the pitches that the batter fails to hit and the fouls that are batted in his general direction. He faces the other eight players on his side and gives the signal for every pitch and for many of the other plays that are made (see next chapter). He stands behind the home plate and the batter and within a ten-foot radius of the plate.



A runner coming down may try to slide into the second baseman to prevent a good throw and break up a double play. In a case like this the baseman should step across the bag after touching it for the force-out, then throw.

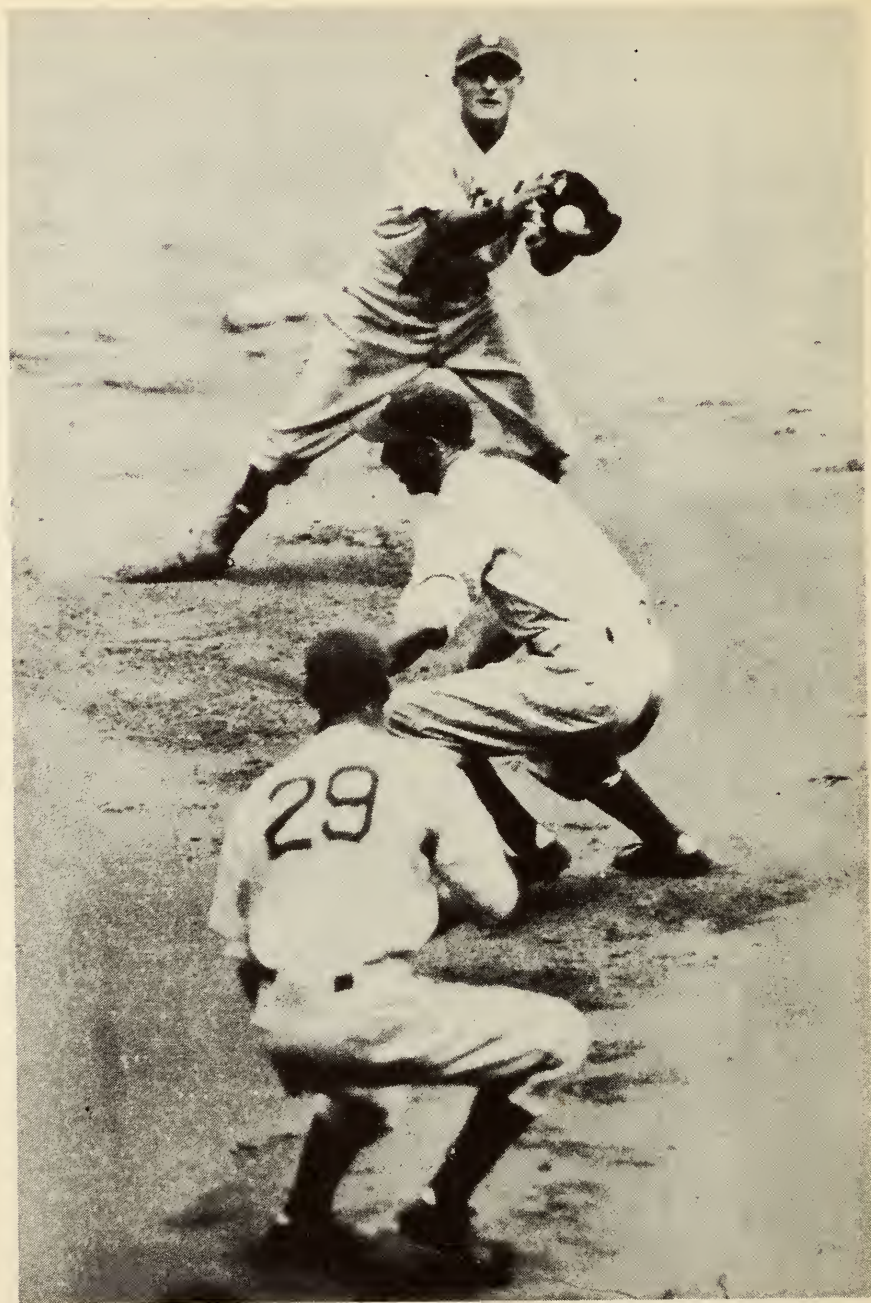
The Bases

On or near first base is the first baseman. His position is important because of the great number of plays that come his way during a game. He must be an accurate thrower, because on his ability to send the ball where he wants it depend many double and triple plays. The pitcher is expected to cover first base when the first baseman has to leave his base in order to go after a ball.

The second baseman plays near second base, between first and second, and the shortstop takes a similar position between second and third. The third baseman's stand near third is sometimes called the "hot corner" because, although only a few plays come



First baseman should receive throws in front of bag, feet well spread.



Second baseman Gehring (top) traps a runner caught off his base.

in that direction, they are usually unexpected and the third baseman must always be on the alert.

The players in the infield should have an understanding as to who is to handle a particular play and should devise signals in order to be able to communicate in an emergency.

The Outfield

The three outfielders are not so restricted as to location on the diamond as are the players in the infield. They go wherever the balls are hit in the outfield. Usually a fly is handled by the outfielder who is nearest to it. Sometimes one of the players will call out who is to try for the catch.

The outfielders must be exceptionally good throwers as they are frequently required to throw the ball accurately for considerable distances.

4. *The Development of Pitching*

THE pitcher's mound is truly no place for the weak-hearted. You must possess infinitely more than a fast ball or a snapping curve when the count is three and two on the hitter and the tying or winning run is on third base. Courage, as much as control or natural ability, is essential. The history of major league baseball is filled with many cases of pitchers who had all the physical equipment for stardom, but who lacked what the players call "ticker"—a fighting heart.

The game of baseball has changed since the days of the mustached players and the cotton-padded uniforms. Changed, also, is the science of pitching. Let me say it again, the science of pitching—for pitching is just that.

When the game was first played, the batter had the privilege of asking for the type of pitch he desired—high or low—and it was thrown underhanded in the manner of modern softball. Since those faraway days, pitching has undergone the most complete change of any department of the sport.

In 1878 the pitcher was required to throw the ball below the batter's waist. By 1883 he had to keep the pitch below the hitter's shoulder.

Then came the overhand and sidearm delivery—and this time the pitcher for the first time had a voice in his own destiny. He could throw the ball from the angle he himself chose.

After the discovery of the curve ball by Arthur Cummins of Brooklyn in the early 1870's, the pitchers were on their way to dominance. The hitters now had to guess what was coming. It was years later that a rookie penned a letter to his mother from training camp. He wrote, "I'll be home soon, Ma; they started to curve 'em today."

And, so with the advent of the curve ball, followed by trick deliveries too numerous to mention—the spit ball, the emery, the fork, the screwball—there developed a titanic battle between the pitcher and the hitter. A battle of wits, incidentally, that is still going on. Today, even with trick pitching deliveries curbed and a livelier ball than was in use in those bygone days, the very essence of baseball is the continual battle for supremacy between the batsman and the fellow out there on the mound.

Before going into the science of pitching, I want to browse more in the romance-land of baseball. I feel that every aspiring ball player should be familiar with the heritage of the game. I believe that if he is, he will be a better player because of it.

Baseball's Heroes

Let's mingle, then, with some of the glamorous figures of yesteryear—and today. Let's recall Wee Willie Keeler who was famous in a bygone era for

"hitting 'em where they ain't" and Babe Ruth, who hit them out of the park. The one, Keeler, went down in the game's history as the greatest place-hitter of all time. He punched the ball. The other, Ruth, simply overpowered the baseball and drove it for almost unbelievable distances.

And Ruth was once a pitcher. To me, the old Bambino is the outstanding example of baseball and the tremendous part it plays in our national life. Babe Ruth was an orphan. He began playing baseball in a Maryland orphanage. Bereft of relatives, the future of young Ruth was not a bright one. After a few years' schooling he would leave the institution. He was a big, strong youngster. Sure, he wouldn't starve when the gates closed on him. But he would be lost in the anonymity of the average man.

But baseball came to his rescue. He caught the eye of a scout, signed with the Boston Red Sox, and developed into a star pitcher.

Most pitchers are content to let the other eight do the batting. But not the Babe. He took great delight in pounding the ball. He reached his height as a pitcher in the 1918 World Series against the Cubs. But as a pitcher he was active only every fourth day. As a batter he would play in every game. So Ruth became an outfielder. Moreover, he became the greatest home-run hitter of all time.

Isn't there an example in the Babe's career for every aspiring youngster? He wrought the most amazing baseball career of all time, earned more money than any other baseball player in history. His travels with the New York Yankees and the associations he made through his connection with baseball sharpened his intellect, made him at home in all circles. The story of Babe Ruth, I believe, is the most inspirational

in baseball history. He still belongs too much to the present for an accurate estimate of his influence and his rightful place in our national game.

You lads who will be the baseball heroes of tomorrow will profit more than financially. Certainly, baseball salaries are attractive. The pay range in the big league has an unlimited maximum. But you will benefit in numerous other ways. You will stay in the best of hotels. You will meet all types of people in your travels. When your baseball days are over, you will be the richer for all this experience that the game has given you. You can surely be proud of your profession if you take up baseball.

Part Two

ON THE MOUND



1. *Get in There and Pitch*

DURING my twenty years in the major leagues I played every position. I even toyed around with pitching. Almost every ballplayer fancies that, if the emergency ever came, he could go in there and do a creditable job, even against major league hitters. Most players, no matter what their positions, know the rudiments of pitching. That all goes back to what I previously said—that it's natural for the kid ballplayer to make pitching his choice.

It's only natural for a boy to want to throw a ball. I recently made a survey that showed 75 per cent of youngsters up to the age of sixteen have aspirations to become pitchers.

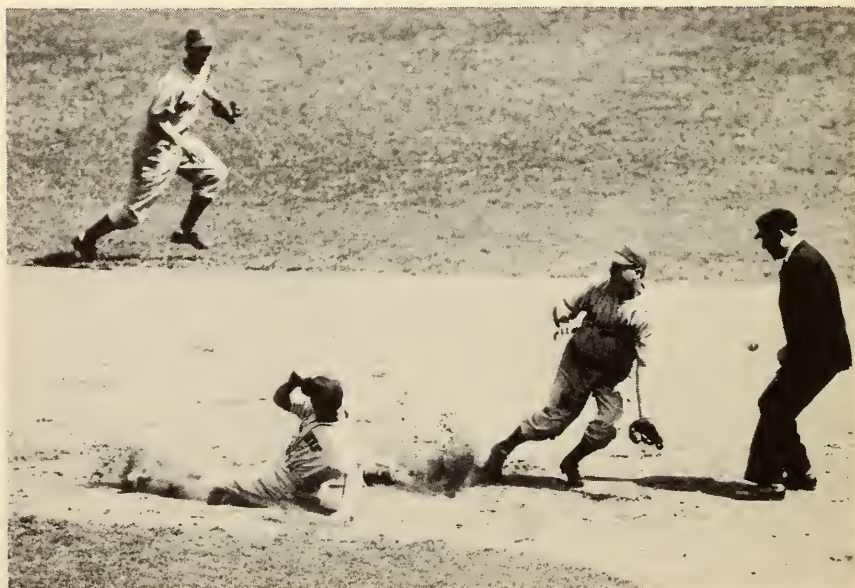
After the lad reaches sixteen, there is a change. Perhaps he realizes that all can't be pitchers. The lanky youngster naturally gravitates toward first base. The big fellow who finds he isn't agile enough to play the infield or outfield turns to catching.

My advice to the youngster who is ambitious to become a pitcher is to keep throwing. Not throwing aimlessly, but throwing with the idea of accuracy

always uppermost in mind. The fastest ball in the universe is useless unless its proprietor knows where it is going. Control is essential. To gain control means incessant practice. Incessant practice means patience. In other words, you must have a deep desire to play baseball if you want to succeed.

Youngsters should bear in mind that the game's greatest pitchers of past and present were once enthusiastic kids with a baseball in their hand, eager to make a mark for themselves. For the first few years, the kid pitcher just throws. When he reaches high school age, the mystery of the curve ball intrigues him. That is all right. A pitcher must have a good curve ball, even if he has tremendous speed.

But the first fundamental to master is control. To have control you must have not only good muscular coordination, but the confidence that the ball will go



A team must be strong in the middle: Catcher threw wide to second, giving runner the base. Shortstop (top) tried vainly to back up play.

true. Afterwards come the fine points, like the curve, the change-of-pace, holding the runner on base, following through with the pitch, and countless other fundamentals I shall discuss in detail.

Rogers Hornsby, one of the greatest right-handed hitters of all time, appreciated the worth of good pitching. After he had become a famous manager, he insisted that pitching was seventy-five per cent of a team's strength. I have always thought that this estimate was a bit too high. Hence I shall amend it by suggesting that this ratio may be correct if you include the catcher.

It is an axiom of baseball that a pennant-winning team must be strong through the middle. This means catching, pitching, shortstop, second baseman, and center field. If you look back over pennant winners in each league, you will note that each had a top-flight catcher. It goes without saying that the pitching was strong, too. Weak pitching just doesn't go hand-in-hand with success.

2. *What the Pitcher Needs*

FORTUNATELY there are no physical limitations for those who would be pitchers, although it must be admitted that the advantage rests with the big, strong fellows. Some managers will turn up their noses in scorn if a rookie isn't over six feet tall and equipped with the shoulders of a Jack Dempsey.

But other managers—perhaps remembering such tiny wizards of the pitching hill as Art Nehf, old-time New York Giant southpaw; Dickie Kerr, the little left-hander of the Chicago White Sox; and Tommy Bridges of the Detroit Tigers—have no such prejudice against the midgets.

It Takes More Than Size

It takes more than size and a fast ball to make a good pitcher. The record books are filled with instances of strong-armed athletes who failed. Of course, as more than one manager has quipped, a fast ball does help. The first question a manager

asks a scout is: "Does he have a fast ball?" If he doesn't, the prospect must possess other qualities to a high degree to make up for this deficiency. He must have an unusually deceptive curve, excellent control, fighting spirit, and pitching sense.

And remember, too, you youngsters—your habits off the field are checked on when you come under a scout's scrutiny. Many a lad has been passed up because the scout learned he disregarded training rules.

There are all kinds of pitchers—fast-ballers, over-handers, side-armers, underhanders, screwballers, knuckle-ballers, curve-ballers. Each pitcher has his favorite pitch. Carl Hubbell of the Giants, of course, is the king of the screwball pitchers. But this does not mean he throws the screwball every time. He may throw it only every third or fourth time. It always is a threat, and each pitch, as far as the batter is concerned, may be a screwball. Hubbell's success lies in the fact that he is a pitching stylist who throws every pitch with the same motion.

Another pitcher of the Hubbell type is Ted Lyons, with the White Sox for nearly twenty years. When Lyons came up to the Sox in 1923 from Baylor University, he was noted for his speed. He got by on this main stock in trade until 1931 when he suffered an arm injury during Spring training.

Lyons, who slept and ate baseball, while a student at Baylor had read of Ed Rommel's knuckle ball. So he practiced the pitch, although his manager told him to forget it after he joined the Sox. Lyons was told that he didn't need the knuckler because of his fast ball.

With much of the strength in his arm gone because of his injury, Lyons turned to the knuckle ball in 1931. He practiced faithfully, for it is a pitch that is difficult

to control. In the end his patience paid dividends. He mastered its control and as a result again reached stardom as a different type of pitcher. His stirring comeback should be an inspiration to every youngster aiming toward a baseball career.

By the examples of these two careers, I believe I can best point out the ingredients needed to make a successful pitcher.

In the first place, they are more than pitchers. When the pitcher comes to bat, the fellow out on the mound usually breathes a bit easier. Most pitchers are completely devoid of any skill at the plate. But Hubbell and Lyons command respect when they come to bat. They put as much effort into batting as into pitching. Likewise, they are always on the alert in the field. They make few fielding mistakes. Clean living has allowed each to maintain a catlike speed and grace despite growing weight with the years.

Both rise to heights in an emergency of any kind. They are threats to get that base hit which will win the game. In tight situations while pitching, they are at their best. They are great all-round competitors, the kind that are the joy of a manager's heart.

3. *Development and Condition*

WHEN you think of temperament in baseball, you think of those curious characters of the sport's history, Rube Waddell, Germany Schaefer, Casey Stengel (in his playing days), Rabbit Maranville, Dizzy Dean, and many others.

These unique personalities were also great ballplayers. Their eccentricities could be tolerated because they delivered on the ball field. As a rule, though, it is the level-headed type that has the best chance for success in baseball—as in any other calling. Players like these I have mentioned are the exception rather than the rule.

Don't think for a minute that the baseball scout doesn't probe into the temperament of rookie ballplayers as much as into their mechanical ability before whipping out a checkbook and gladdening the heart of a minor league magnate. You boys, as prospective major leaguers, will be weighed from every angle. And far from the least important is temperament.

How does the lad react to tense situations?

Does he go into a tantrum when one of his teammates makes an error?

Does he tighten up and lose his effectiveness with men on bases?

These and many more questions are asked by the baseball sleuth before he enters into negotiations for a player he is scouting.

A pitcher must learn to curb his temper. Once the opposition discovers that it can anger a pitcher, he will be in for a merciless riding. More than one pitcher has been ridden out of the league by the verbal lashes of rival teams.

Don't get this confused, though, with fighting spirit. In the vernacular of the diamond, "Be tough out there." The pitcher is engaged in a battle of skill and wits with every batter he faces. To reverse this illustration, I give you the formula Ty Cobb always used at the plate when he was in the big leagues.

"I go up to that plate telling myself over and over I'm better than the pitcher," he said.



A pitcher requires a good deal of early season conditioning, and Carl Hubbell (extreme left) finds High-Low as effective as anything.

This is a good tip for the pitcher to follow. You must first believe in yourself. If you don't think you can fool the hitter, you're beaten before you start.

You must learn to keep cool in desperate situations. It is a test of courage indeed for a hurler to look around and see two or three men on bases and none out. This happens many, many times in every pitcher's life. Those who overcome these jams are the ones who win. Those who become jittery and either start missing the plate or throwing fast pitches are lost.

The importance of a pitcher's being in tip-top condition also cannot be overstressed. The saying that a pitcher's arm is just as good as his legs is true. Consequently, during the early part of the season in particular, a pitcher must do a lot of running, such as chasing fungoes, pepper game, and the like. When the legs are not in condition, the arm seems to tire easily. Sometimes a pitcher will be going along fine in a ball game when a hard run on the bases will finish him as far as any more effective pitching goes. This goes to prove the importance of keeping the legs fit. The legs, wind, and arm must be in shape to work together if a pitcher is to be able to take his regular turn on the mound and pitch a full nine-inning ball game.

Before going in for pitching in a serious way, every young player should also realize the importance of strengthening the throwing arm. An arm is developed by continual throwing during the years when a youngster is growing. As long as the arm is not sore or tired, constant throwing will be of more help than harm. Most pitchers do not throw enough.

4. *The Importance of Control*

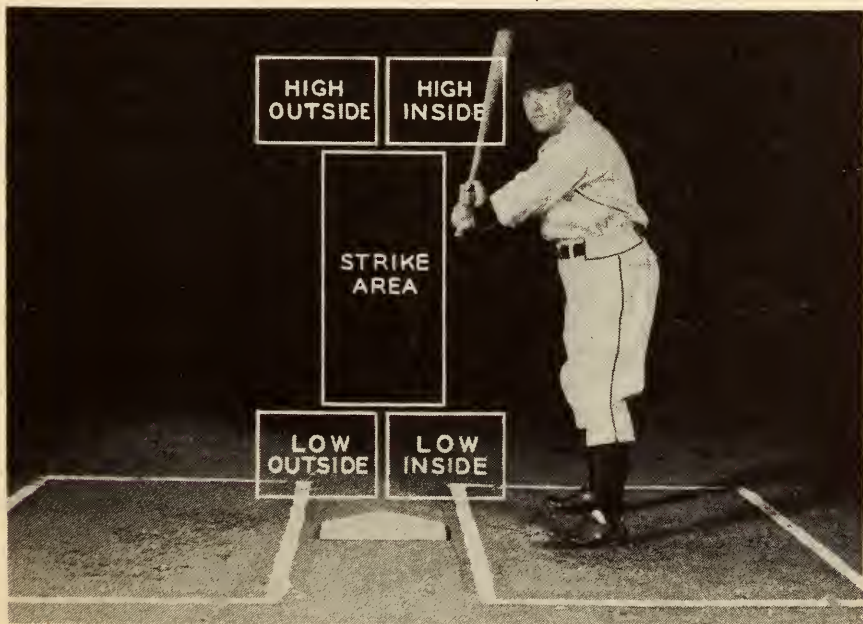
ALL pitchers eventually realize that control is the secret of success. This is particularly true in the higher classification of the professional leagues, where the hitters are experienced and make the ball come over the plate. Dozens of pitchers who are tried out in the majors each year fail to make good for only one reason, lack of control. Many major league twirlers have added years to their careers simply by having good control, which is more important than ever to them when they have once lost a portion of their speed.

There isn't a manager who would not prefer to see a hit made off his pitcher, rather than have the pitcher issue a base on balls. Control will enable a pitcher to stay ahead of the hitter. Many times, getting the first strike on the batter is the turning point of the ball game. The best hitters in the major leagues are just twice as dangerous when they have the pitcher in the hole—that is, when the count is two balls and no strikes, three balls and one strike, or three balls and no strikes. This is where control becomes an essential

part of good pitching. In such a situation the pitcher with control can throw a curve or a change-of-pace, especially when important runs are in scoring position, instead of having to come right down the middle with a fast ball.

There are pitchers with a great fast ball, who are able to throw them past the hitter continually throughout the ball game, but they are the exception rather than the rule. Nothing in the pitching resources you possess will be more important than a good fast ball, but, at the same time, having control will enable you to save yourself throughout the game by changing the speed of your pitch from time to time and throwing the hitter off his stride.

While warming up, at all times practice control. Pitch to some mark with your catcher. Never throw a ball without some idea in mind as to where you are



The author poses at the plate to demonstrate strike and ball areas.

attempting to place it. Major league pitchers, who have acquired exceptionally good control, are constantly practicing this method. You cannot work too much or too hard on control, and the more time you devote to it, the more you are adding strength to your pitching arm and increasing your chances for success.

Know the Batters

Knowing the weaknesses of the various hitters comes under the heading of smart pitching. This type of pitching usually starts with the better type of semi-pro, college, and professional baseball. Once again, however, it gives the youngster something to think about as to the importance of control, for without being able to pitch to a batter's weakness, knowledge of it means nothing.

In professional baseball, control is one of the main points of strategy. During the season, usually before the first game of each series, meetings are held at which the manager goes over the opposing team's line-up with the entire club. Main attention is given to the opposing hitters who bat in third, fourth, fifth, and sixth positions where the punch of every ball club is bunched. Curve balls are decided upon for a certain hitter, fast balls a bit high and inside to another, change of pace to another, and so on down the line.

Infielders and outfielders consequently know what is to be pitched to each of these opposing batsmen and play their positions accordingly, moving to the right or to the left of their positions for the different hitters, coming in or moving back. The shortstop and the second baseman have a perfect understanding on each pitch, deciding who will cover second base on each play. With the pitcher and the catcher working

together and the entire team knowing exactly what is going on, perfect team play is possible. At least, every percentage is played, and over a period of many games such complete team cooperation is bound to help in the winning of many extra games for the pitcher and his ball club.

5. *Fundamentals of Pitching*

NOW we discuss the more necessary fundamentals of pitching, using information gained by intensive study of more than 200,000 feet of slow-motion pictures of major league stars.

The raised stitches on the baseball in use today are of added advantage to all pitchers. The curve-ball artist can use these raised seams to help the grip of the curve-ball delivery. The prominent seams help immensely in controlling the pitch.

With an overspin to the curve ball and a reverse spin to the fast ball on the way to the hitter, there is a certain amount of air resistance according to the speed of the pitch. There are several types of grips for pitching; some prefer to grip the ball with the seams, others across the seams. (These are explained in detail in the next chapter.)

Maximum speed is necessary in order to make the ball do tricks. Saving the snap of the wrist *until after the stride has taken place*, and following the throwing arm motion a split second *after the stride* will give the necessary coordination of both stride and arm to add what is called "the hop" to your fast ball.

It is a serious mistake for pitchers to use too much exertion during the wind-up or before letting the ball go without the wind-up when runners are on bases. Expending all of this effort at the final instant when you release the ball will give you what is termed a sneaky fast ball.

There is one fundamental that you must follow in order to have muscle and joint sense, which gives perfect coordination. *As the stride takes place, the pitching arm must remain back of the rear shoulder until the forward foot strikes the ground.* Perfect balance is absolutely necessary at this point. Rapid movement of pitching arm follows here. As soon as the toe touches the ground on the stride forward, the pitching arm follows as rapidly as possible with a drive and a snap. This gives you the extra break to the curve and the hop to the fast one.

Important fundamentals to remember are these:

Complete relaxation until just before you deliver the pitch.

The more flexibility the better.

The stride to take place a split second before the pitch.

The toe to point toward the batter when taking the stride forward.

The "breaking" of the wrists.

The follow through.

Fielding position following the pitch.

Control—control—control.

Position on the Mound

According to the rules of baseball, until 1940, both feet were always kept in contact with the pitching rubber. In that year the pitching rule was amended:



As the stride is taken, the pitching arm must remain back of the shoulder until the foot strikes the ground. Perfect balance is absolutely necessary.

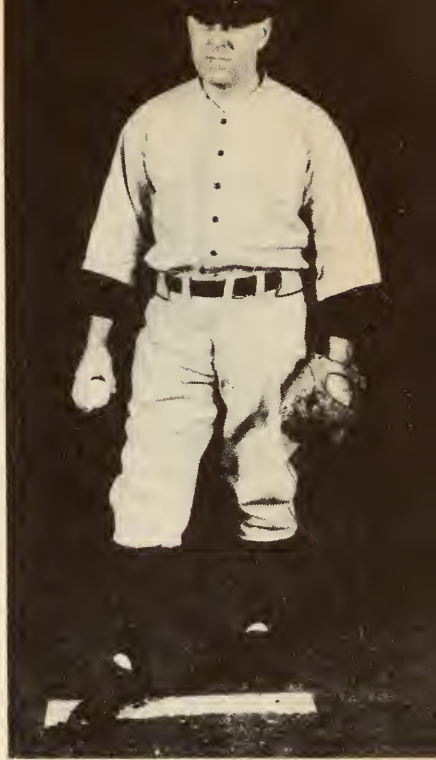
Position on mound before the pitch: Note one foot may be kept behind the pitching rubber.

“Rule 27. Sec. 1. Preliminary to pitching, the pitcher shall take his position facing the batsman with *his pivot foot always on or in front of and in contact with the pitcher's plate.* In the act of delivering the ball to the batsman, *the pitcher's other foot is free, except that he cannot step to either side of the pitcher's plate.* He shall not raise either foot until in the act of delivering the ball to the batsman, or in throwing to a base.”

Note: The change in the rule is this: After the pitcher takes his legal position for delivery of the ball to the batsman, he may take one step backward and one step forward, but not to either side. This rule was made in the hope of giving the pitcher more freedom of motion.

If the new rule is not used, both feet are kept in contact with the pitching rubber with the spikes of the toe of the rear foot pressed rather firmly against the rubber. The pivot or forward foot is laid crosswise about two-thirds of the way to the right of the rubber for a right-hand pitcher, and the opposite for a left-hand pitcher. Then the pivot foot swings around into

Position on mound with runners on: Keep foot close to ground or runner will get jump on you.



position parallel with the rubber just before the stride is taken.

If you are having trouble with your control, move a few inches with your pivot foot to either the right or left of the pitching rubber. Sometimes this places you on the proper angle for certain types of batters according to their stance at the plate.

Allow the arms to hang loosely at your side before you go into your wind-up. Some pitchers seem to better their control by hesitating momentarily at the top of their wind-up. This is a tip worth taking.

As the pivot is made at the hips and you swing around to face the hitter, make sure that your eyes are on the plate before you start any movement forward. Not to do so is a serious mistake which is made even by experienced pitchers. If your eyes do not locate the plate in time, it is like pitching at a moving target. Try to keep your eyes on the plate during the entire wind-up.

Pick out a spot at which to pitch for every ball, keep your eyes on that spot continually, and you will find immediate improvement in your control.

Position on Mound with Runners on Base

Ordinarily, your rear foot should be touching the forward front side of the pitching rubber with a comfortable spread of your feet according to your size. A distance of from two to three feet is about right. When going through a complete wind-up, the forward foot is often raised high in the air, accompanied by a bending of the knee and a fast kick. With runners on base, you must keep the foot fairly close to the ground, in order to prevent base-runners from getting a jump on the pitch.

The distance of your stride during either a wind-up or a pitch without a wind-up is most important. A rather lengthy stride, but a comfortable one, is advised. This should be judged according to your build. Give particular attention to your stride, stretching it as far as possible, but at the same time making sure that the distribution of weight feels correct, to assure you complete coordination.

In order to protect the base-runner, a recently added rule reads:

“With a runner on first or second base, the pitcher must face the batsman with both hands holding the ball in front of him. If he raises his arms above his head or out in front, *he must return to a natural pitcher's position and stop before starting his delivery of the ball to the batsman.*”

The Follow-Through

By taking a stride of the proper length and at the same time *pointing the forward toe on a line toward the batsman*, you cannot help but develop a complete follow-through. Holding on to the ball until after the stride has taken place will also better your follow-through. Many pitchers make the serious mistake of releasing the pitch too soon. Swinging the toe around in an arc will not only give you a perfect follow-through delivery; but will also leave you in the right fielding position.

The Wind-Up

In all types of wind-up, the arms start forward, then go upward and backward. Some pitchers prefer to bring the arms completely back of the neck before



A stride of proper length, with the forward toe pointing toward the batter, should insure a perfect follow-through, which is vitally important for good delivery. Hold the ball as long as you possibly can after you have taken the stride.

again starting upward and forward. Other pitchers raise the arms up to a position about even with the peak of the cap, repeating this motion two or three times before releasing the ball. Still others may raise the arms so that the hands will stop about over and at the center of the top of the head, stopping at this point, then starting forward.

Each of these various types has been used successfully, so it is up to you to figure one out for yourself. During the past few years the popular wind-up has been the swinging motion once up or twice up to the peak of the cap, followed by the pitch. Many major league pitchers seem to feel this type of wind-up has helped their control. *Whatever type of wind-up you use, however, relaxation and the "breaking" snap of the wrist*

Start of the wind-up: Arms start forward, then up and back. Some pitchers bring the ball down behind the neck before going up and forward.

both when bringing the pitching arm backward and when bringing it forward will give you a swaying motion which will bring more flexibility and effectiveness to your pitch.

Pitching Without Wind-Up

With runners on the bases, when no wind-up can be taken, the pitcher should come to a position of rest with the hands a few inches below or above the belt-line, but never too high. From a high position most of the necessary free, swinging action is lost. You are better off if you have a lower pitching stance with the hands at this point, because the hands must drop down first before being raised in order to swing into the proper pitching arc. The same fundamentals as during the complete wind-up are then followed from this point until the pitch is made to the batsman.

In all types of pitching the arms should be kept away from the body until the arm is well started in the direction of the batsman. In sidearm pitching, as the pitching arm reaches the center of the body, the hand swings in a little toward the body so that the pitching elbow is fairly close to the body as the hand passes by.



6. *Types of Delivery*

THE principal types of delivery are the overhand, the sidearm, and the underhand. Curve balls, fast balls, change-of-pace, and knuckle balls all can be thrown with any type of delivery. You should select the type which is most suited to your physique and ability.

The overhand pitcher drops the arm downward in the first move, followed by a backward swing, the arm coming almost directly up at this point just before the overhand and somewhat downward snap is given to the pitch before the ball is released. An overhand pitcher who can rise up on his toes while making the pitch, and at the same time combine every effort at the finish of the throw with speedy flexible wrist action can develop a nice hop or rise on the ball.

The underhand pitcher starts the pitch with the arm dropping down within about two feet of the ground. With a backward swing the pitching arm is then raised to a height about level with the rear shoulder, at which point the arm again starts in a swift downward path which, when the pitching hand



The overhand pitch: At left Lew Fonseca demonstrates the straight forward and downward motion of the typical overarm pitcher. Below, an excellent follow-through is shown by left-handed Harry Eisenstat, who is in position to move promptly to field the ball.





The underhand pitch: Arm drops within two feet of the ground. Back swing puts pitching arm about level with the rear shoulder. Forward swing takes pitching hand back to within twelve inches of the ground. Arm starts upward as ball is released, thus imparting a natural spin to it.

reaches dead center, is within 12 inches of the ground. The arm then starts upward again just as the ball is released, causing a natural spin—an overspin that should make the ball sink on the way to the batsman. The underhand type of pitch is rather unusual and not very successful on the whole, so it is not recommended for the younger pitcher.

The sidearm pitcher, after raising both arms in the first movement, drops the pitching arm in a downward and backward swing with the pitching hand lowered about even with the knee. Then he brings it backward and up to a height about even with the shoulder. On the final swing downward from the shoulder level the pitching hand again drops to a point between the waist and the knee, and is then raised about even with the waistline as the pitching arm swings back again, coming through on the final swing on a line about six

Oral Hildebrand at the finish and follow-through of a three-quarter sidearm pitch, of which he is a leading exponent. Delivery is very similar to that of overhand pitch.

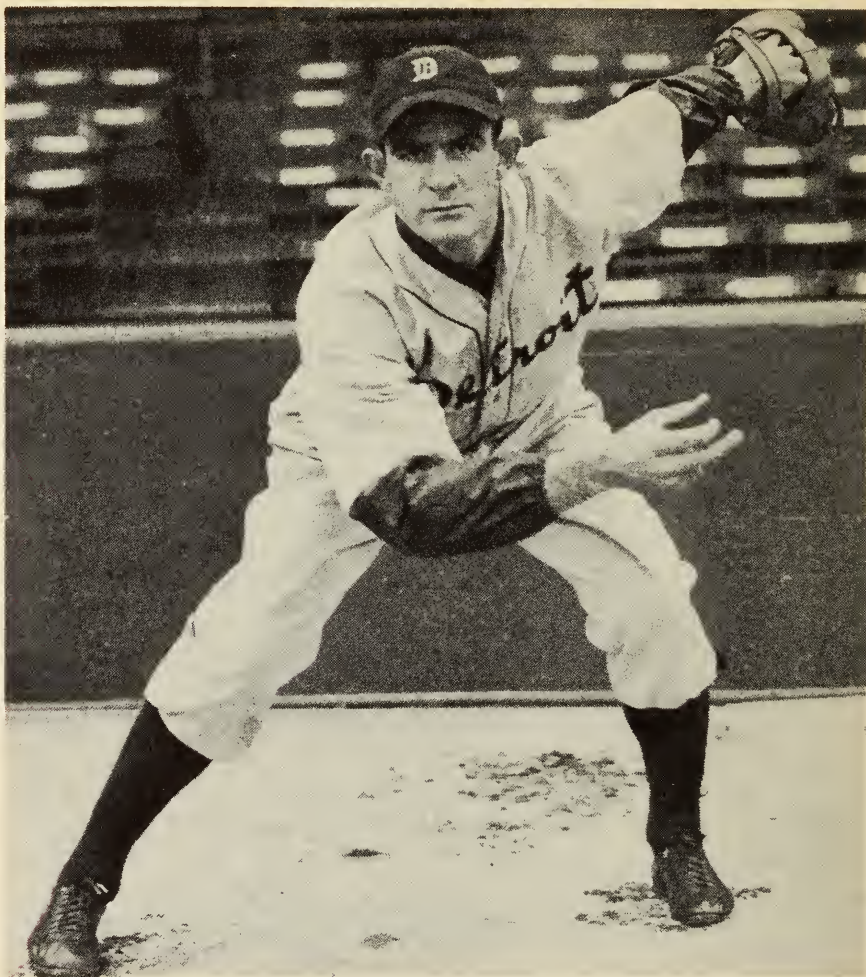


inches above the hips as the ball is released. The pitching hand in this movement is kept extended and well away from the body with the elbow fairly close to the body for the necessary rhythm and balance.

A three-quarter delivery is similar to overhand delivery, but the ball is thrown somewhat farther away from the body.

Some right-handed sidearm pitchers switch to the overhand delivery when they face left-handed hitters. The reason for this is obvious. A sidearm pitch gives a left-handed batter a clear view of the pitch from the moment it starts.

Some of the present-day pitchers who successfully employ the sidearm type of delivery are Johnny Allen and Willis Hudlin of the Indians, and Charley Root of the Cubs. The most notable pitcher of this type in the past was Walter Johnson.

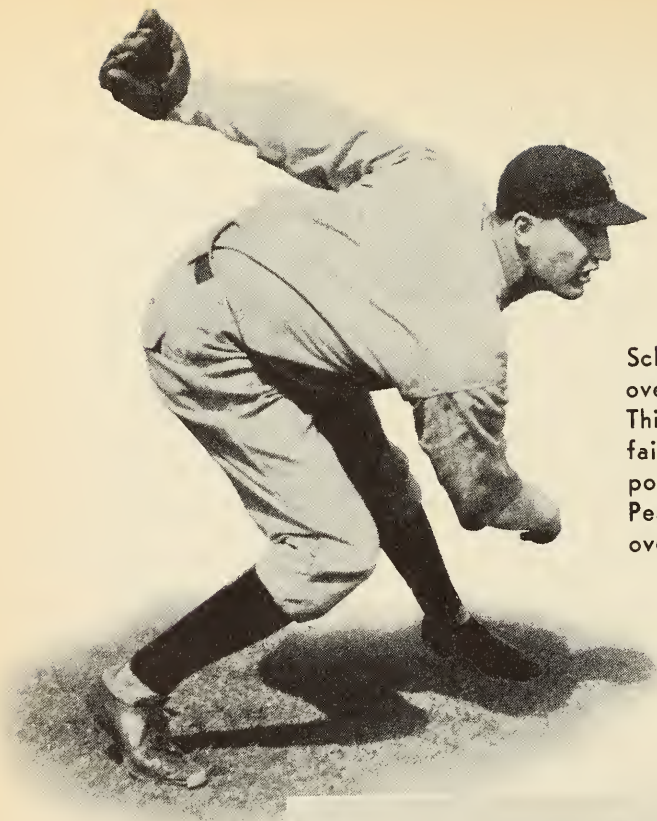


Eldon Auker in fine fielding position at finish of his underarm pitch.

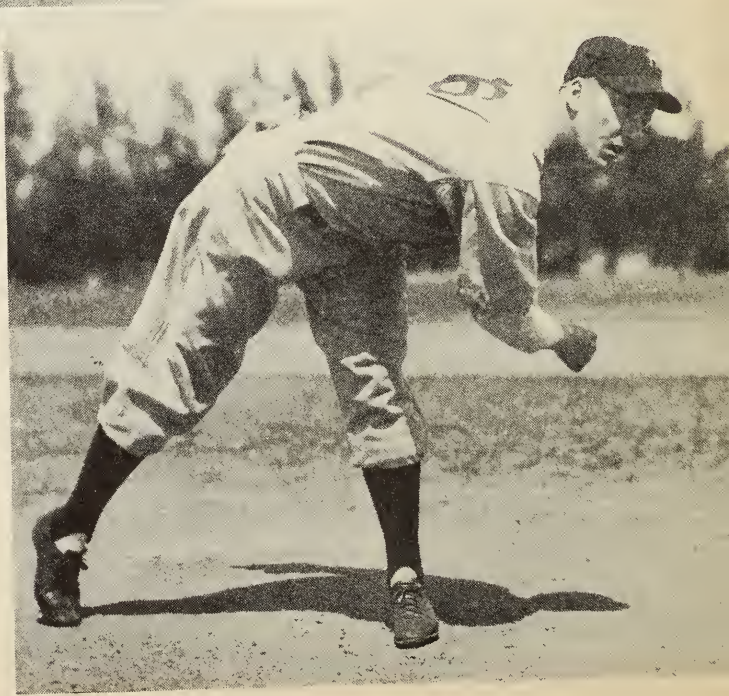
Arthur (Dazzy) Vance, the burly Brooklyn pitcher of a few seasons ago, and Bob Feller, Cleveland's spectacular star, provide examples of overhand pitchers. Feller, like Vance, comes up high on his toes at the peak of his wind-up and uses this added leverage to obtain more speed on the ball.

Strictly speaking, the underhand pitcher is a freak. There have been only three in the last two decades to reach the major leagues. There was Carl Mays, the

old-timer with the New York Yankees; Ad Liska, who served a few years with the Washington Senators; and Eldon Auker, now with the St. Louis Browns. Auker adopted this style after an injury suffered on the football field had made it impossible for him to throw in his natural way. I should not advise any youngster to use this delivery.



Schoolboy Rowe (left) is an overhand fast ball pitcher. This delivery is generally fairly high and results in pop-ups and flies. Monte Pearson (below) delivers an overhand curve effectively.



7. *Curves and Fast Balls*

CURVES and fast balls are the pitcher's stock in trade. Time spent in studying and practicing the different ways of throwing them will be amply rewarded on the diamond later on.

Overhand Curve

The overhand curve-ball pitch which breaks almost directly downward is effective against both right- and left-hand hitters. In a pinch, this pitch is the most effective of all curve-ball pitches against the better grade of batters and more so when thrown by a right-hand pitcher to a left-hand batter, or a left-hand pitcher to a right-hand batter. One should endeavor at all times to keep this pitch low and inside.

The wrist actually folds over and breaks off sharply with snap and speed in order to obtain the sharp downward break necessary. Extreme flexibility of the wrist joints must be developed to acquire this sharp break. It is difficult to master, although a trump card in any bag of pitching tricks.

The overhand curve-ball pitch is often called the double-play ball, because it usually is hit on the ground.

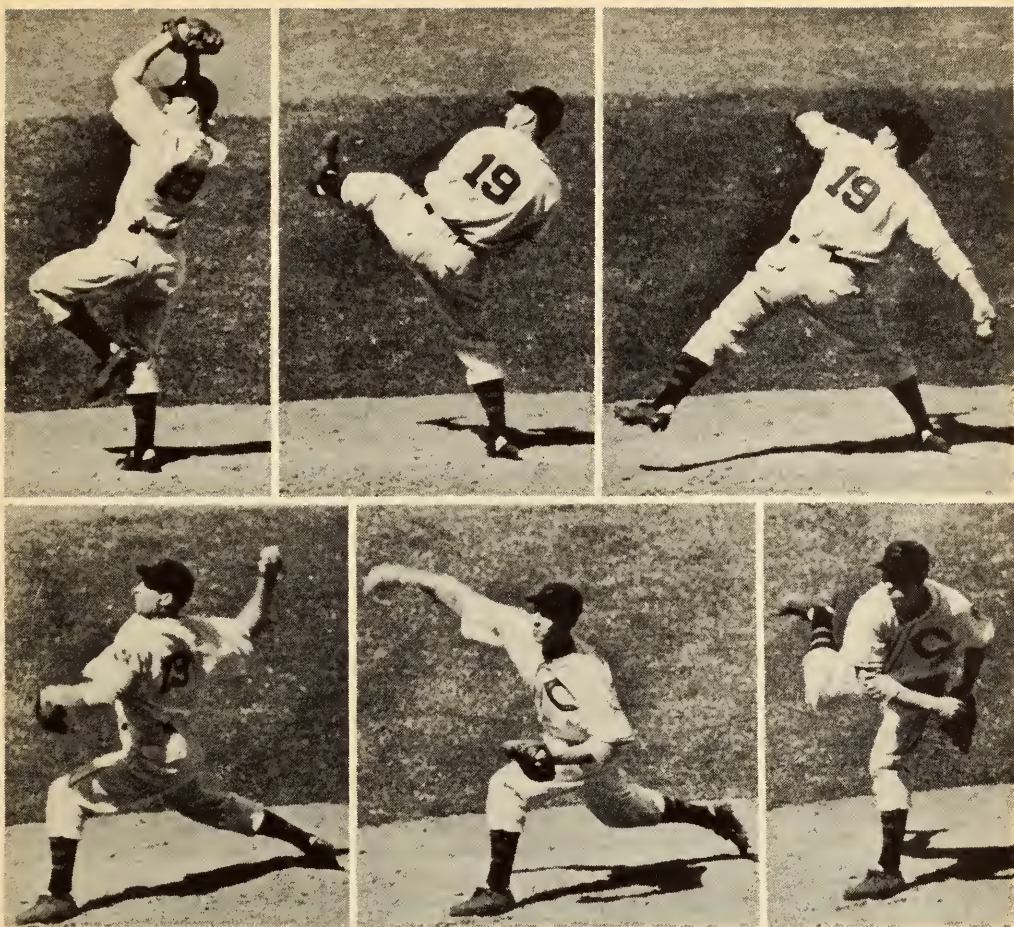
Underhand Curve

The underhand curve is thrown with a peculiar sweeping delivery that goes with underhand pitching. Because an underhand pitcher with any speed at all has a natural sinker with his fast-ball pitch, the curve delivered in the same manner of pitching motion works both as curve ball and change-of-pace merely by changing the speed of the ball and adding extra false motion or effort for the change-of-pace pitch.

When the underhand fast ball is breaking, not many curve balls are used during the course of the ballgame. However, the underhand curve is a handy tool by which the underhand pitcher can throw the batsman off balance and bother his timing of the pitch. This curve-ball pitch is used more often when there are two strikes on the batter or when the batter has the pitcher in the hole. It is handled much the same as the fast ball and is pitched by using an extra flip with a slight break and roll of the wrist. The ball rises and breaks away from a right-hand batter when delivered by a right-hand pitcher.

Overhand Fast Ball

If you are an overhand pitcher and your fast ball is "alive," it should rise or sail on the way to the batter. Overhand pitchers have more success when pitching high, between belt and shoulder, concentrating on making most pitches about letter high, or six inches below the shoulder of the batter. This gives the overhand pitch the opportunity to take advantage of the proper



Bob Feller pitches one of the fastest balls in baseball. His stride is longer than average, but note how he completes his stride with pitching arm well back. (1) Start of wind-up. (2) Beginning of backswing. (3) Start of stride. (4) End of stride. (5) Ball release with arm at shoulder level. (6) Follow-through.

line of flight, which accounts for a slight rise just before the ball reaches the hitter. On a pitch of this type the batter will be likely to swing just below the center of the ball. This explains why so many balls on such pitches are hit into the air to either the infield or outfield for put-outs. If you are an overhand pitcher, it will pay you to concentrate on using your fast ball in this manner, keeping in mind that the pitch

is most effective letter high and fairly close to the average batter. Crowding the hitter with a high, fast ball obtains better results than the high pitch on the outside of the plate, except in a few cases which, of course, are considered when the manager gives instructions concerning the opposing team.

Sidearm Fast Ball

The sidearm fast-ball pitch has a tendency to sail away from a right-hand hitter, assuming that it is thrown by a right-hand pitcher. In other cases it will have a slight rise, or sink on the way toward the plate.

You will have to give some attention to your own particular pitch and style if you are a sidearm pitcher. You are between the overhand and underhand delivery and a lot of things can happen to such a pitch. Should your sidearm pitch break away from the hitter, you can successfully pitch outside and get away with it. If the ball breaks toward the batter, take advantage of this and keep the pitch on the inside of the plate. This pitch is very effective when there are runners on base with a double play in sight, as the batter is apt to hit the pitch on the ground.

The sidearm pitcher can easily develop a free, swinging delivery which should enable him to do a lot of pitching without injuring or tiring his arm. Using a "cross-fire" delivery when pitching sidearm is a method successfully employed by many pitchers in the major leagues. The right-hand sidearm pitcher, when taking his stride, steps over toward the third-base line somewhat between third base and the home plate to achieve this effect. This usually makes the hitter give ground and lean or pull away, and if the pitch is kept from the center of the plate or away

from the batter, there is little chance of his hitting the ball successfully.

The sidearm pitch is kept away from the batter when the cross-fire delivery is used. Remember that a sidearm pitcher who is not using the cross-fire delivery can still pitch sidearm and keep the ball low on the inside if the ball is sinking. Should your sidearm pitch have a rise, keep the pitch higher on the batter.

Sidearm Curve Ball

The sidearm curve-ball pitch is most effective when used by a right-hand pitcher against a right-hand batter, or a left-hand pitcher against a left-hand batter. When it is used in the cross-fire delivery, make sure to start this pitch from the center of the plate or away from the hitter. This is an exceptionally good pitch for a crucial spot in the ballgame, or at any time when the hitter has the pitcher in the hole.

The importance of control is vital in order to be able to throw a curve ball when the batter has the pitcher in the hole. The sidearm curve in many cases will cause the batter to pull away when it is properly pitched from the center to the outside corner of the plate. Make sure not to get this pitch on the inside corner of the plate, as this removes the effectiveness of the sidearm curve-ball delivery. As in the case of all curve-ball deliveries, keep the pitch low between the belt and the batter's knees. A curve ball pitched high is ineffectual against practically all batters.

8. *Gripping the Ball*

THE mistake of gripping the ball too firmly is made even by many pitchers in professional baseball. I know of one particular instance where a pitcher had fair success in one of the major leagues for several years, although he had always been bothered with his control. Upon his being traded to another club, the coach noticed that he was gripping the ball as if he were attempting to crush it to pieces. He was told to relax his grip, especially on the fast ball (the curve-ball pitch is held a bit more firmly). This gave him the necessary flexibility, and as a result, his pitching has been much improved.

Fast-Ball Grip

The fast-ball pitch should not be gripped too firmly. A tight grip has a tendency to lock the muscles of the pitching arm and hinder proper control.

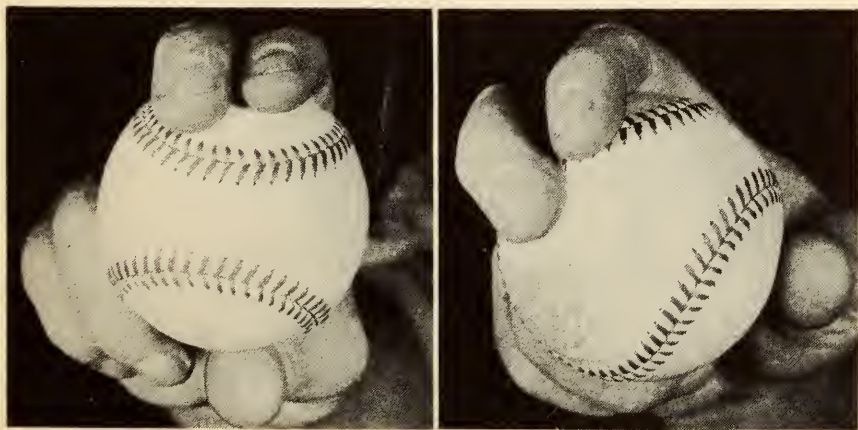
The ball is held well back in the hand, not quite touching the palm (about $\frac{3}{4}$ inch away). Place the forefinger and the second finger close together on the

top part of the ball, but do not grip it too tightly. Practically all successful pitchers, when pitching curve and fast balls, like to feel the seams with the first and second fingers. This can be accomplished by gripping the ball either with the seams or across the seams. The thumb is placed down, about under the center, of the ball, in order to give the proper balance, because the feel of the ball in the pitcher's hand is important. Adjusting the thumb a bit either to the left or the right will give this necessary balance.

As the ball is released, a slight pressure takes place in the first and second joints of the first and second fingers, while the thumb merely rests lightly against the ball.

Curve-Ball Grip

The grip for the curve ball is similar to the fast-ball grip, although in some cases the thumb may be held very slightly farther under the ball. The release of the ball for the curve, however, is entirely different from that for the fast-ball pitch. The ball is released



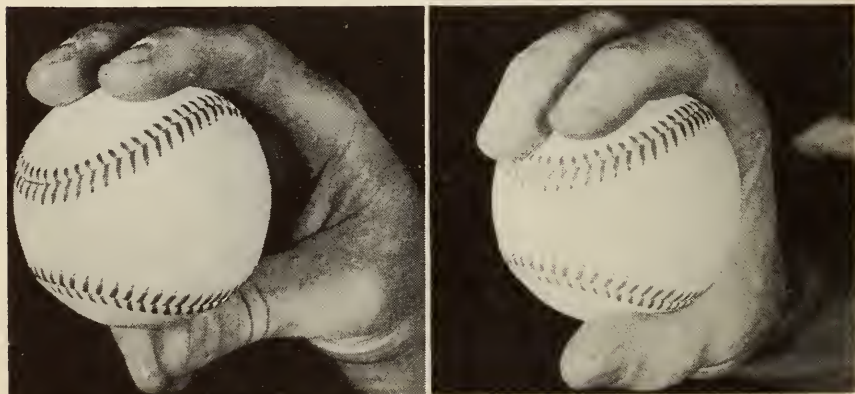
Grips for fast ball (left) and curve (right) are similar, with the hand turned slightly for the latter. Too tight a grip will lock the muscles.

along the side of the first finger nearest the thumb, giving the ball an overspin, which, with the quick breaking or snap of the wrist, will cause a downward break on an overhand delivery.

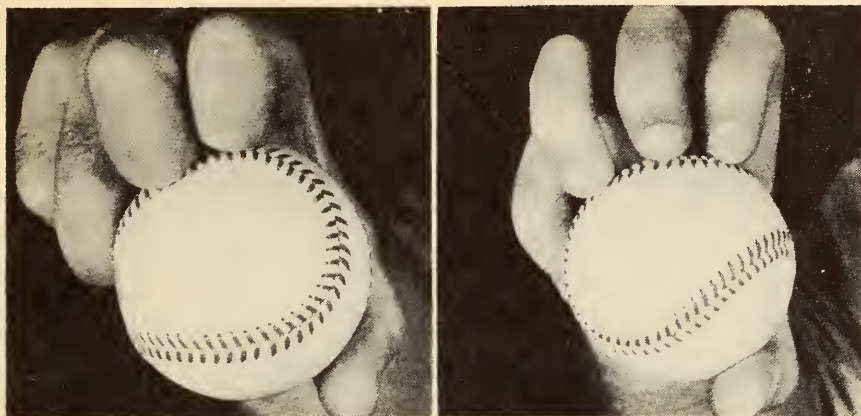
The break will be downward and outward with a three-quarter delivery. The sidearm curve will break out and away. In all cases, I am assuming that a right-hand pitcher is pitching to a right-hand batsman, or a left-hand pitcher to a left-hand batsman. The opposite break would occur should the pitcher and the hitter be opposite handed.

Change-of-Pace Grip

The slow ball or so-called change-of-pace is used to catch the batsman off stride. The pitch must be thrown with the same motion as the fast ball and curve ball, for the motion is what fools the hitter, not the speed of the ball. A fast-ball motion must be perfected so that the change-of-pace coming to the batsman at approximately half the speed of your fast ball will make him stride forward with his weight too soon



Grips for the change-of-pace are approximately like fast ball grip, but ball may be held by fingertips (left) or against palm (right).



Knuckle ball may be pitched with first joints resting on ball (left) or with fingertips on the seam. This ball may ruin a young pitching arm.

and lose all timing. This is a particularly fine pitch to make when you are in trouble or behind the batter in the count of balls and strikes.

The change-of-pace type of pitch can be made either with a straight ball thrown slowly or with a slow curve, using the change-of-pace motion. Con-



The screw ball (grip shown above) is another trick ball that can ruin a beginner's arm. Wrist and hand twist to side as the ball is released.

trol is important with this pitch as in all pitching, because the ball must be kept low, preferably a bit outside whenever possible, if the pitch is to be successful. The change-of-pace is practically useless when pitched high for a strike. Let me caution you—be wary of throwing a slow ball to a poor hitter. His timing is so inconsistent that he may hit it a mile.

The grip for the change-of-pace is the same as for the fast ball, with a bit more relaxation in the fingers and the ball held farther away from the palm of the hand, or pressed in firmly against the palm, exaggerated one way or the other.

In the change-of-pace curve-ball grip, use the curve-ball grip with a more tense wrist action, so the wrist will not break too much and speed up the pitch.

Young pitchers will do better to pay more attention to the fast ball, and then to the curve, before working too much with the change-of-pace delivery. Many a young pitcher by overworking the change-of-pace has ruined his arm before it has fully developed. You must first learn other things about pitching. Then comes the change-of-pace.

Knuckle-Ball Grip

The same thing can be said for the knuckle-ball pitch as far as the young pitcher is concerned. A knuckle ball should be left for the more experienced pitcher. This applies to all freak deliveries including the screw ball.

9. *Helpful Hints*

THE following suggestions should be carefully read and kept in mind on the mound:

Learn control before anything else.

It is much better to use one type of delivery.

Control of pitching muscles gives more speed.

Using a change-of-pace pitch puts a drag on the pitching muscles, like applying the brake to an automobile, and may be harmful if overdone.

The sidearm pitch sinks more when the grip is made along the seams of the ball, because the two seams revolve toward the batter.

The overhand pitcher gets a better rise to his pitch by gripping the ball across the seams, causing more air resistance, which makes this type of pitch rise.

The pitcher should make every effort to get the first pitch across for a strike, although the first one need not always be a fast ball. Mix them up!

Never waste a ball deliberately unless the catcher signals for a wide pitch. Every pitch should count.

Try at all times to catch the batsman off balance.

Never let him get set for a pitched ball. Remember, you know what you're going to throw, but he doesn't.

Keep your eyes and ears open. If your defense is playing for a certain type of pitch, don't cross it up by using some other kind.

Whatever the choice may be, hold both your fast-ball and your curve-ball grip in the same manner as to the position of your first and second finger. Otherwise opposing hitters and coaches will be able to predict what your pitch will be.

With a man in position to score, pitch low curves. These are hard to hit into the air for a long fly.

If the batter is nervous and fidgety, take plenty of time. Let him get more nervous.

Vary the interval between pitches. If you use the same length of time on every pitch, you invite base-runners to steal.

Don't use a different type of delivery for each different type of pitch. Batters quickly will sense what is coming.

Don't pitch a slow ball to a weak-hitter. The fact that he is a poor hitter indicates that his timing is poor; he's the type who may blast a slow pitch.

Never throw a slow ball with a runner on base, or he'll be able to steal easily.

In a Pinch

Every pitcher has what we call a best ball, for most of them are either curve-ball or fast-ball pitchers. A few of the outstanding pitchers in the major leagues have both a great curve and a fast ball, but the majority must depend in a pinch on their best pitch, which is either a fast ball or a curve, except in rare cases.

So, if you are a fast-ball pitcher, use this pitch in

the tight spots in the ball game, making sure that you always expend that little extra effort—the added push that makes the standout pitcher. The same is true of the curve, should your curve be better than your fast one. Break the curve off sharply and keep it down in the right spot. Here again you must have *control*, so as to be able to place the pitch in the most effective spot, when important runs are in scoring position.

Studying the Batsman

The batsman with a high hitting stance of the arms and the bat is usually the more troublesome hitter. It is much easier for a batter to hit if he has his hands held about letter high where he is in position to hit at the fast ball pitched across the chest. At the same time it is not very difficult to swing at a low pitch from this position. Consequently, the batsman with a lower batting stance of the arms can be pitched high, fast balls. You will have better results by crowding the high stance hitter with the pitch, or slowing up on him if he has a tendency to stride fast.

The batter to be careful of is the one with the short stride, who as a general rule is difficult to fool with both fast and change-of-pace pitches. Sometimes this type of hitter will be weak on a curve-ball pitch, or



The batter with a high hitting stance is usually in position to reach both low and high fast balls.

a fast ball pitched well to the inside of the plate.

By paying strict attention and giving considerable thought to the position each batsman takes at the plate, you can become a smart pitcher who pitches to spots and takes advantage of any weakness the batter may have with a certain type of pitch, or with regard to the spot in which the ball is thrown.

Always remember that there is nothing quite so important to success as good control. Making as few pitches as possible during a ball game will save that extra energy which you will need for a tight spot.

Proper warming up before going into a game and bearing down while one is practicing are also important. Start to throw easily, increasing the tempo for approximately fifteen minutes. This should be sufficient warming up to allow you to cut loose with a fast ball and a sharp-breaking curve. Young pitchers, who are not fully developed physically, would do well not to go in for too much curve-ball pitching. While the arm is going through the developing stage, injury can very easily take place with the strain of constant curve-ball pitching.

A good point to remember is that a fast ball is much more important for a young pitcher to possess than a curve, especially at the start. In other words, a curve ball can usually be developed later to some extent, while a fast ball is the stock in trade which must be developed by a youngster along with his growth. This comes with constant pitching practice as a youngster, which gives strength to the pitching muscles, flexibility, and the necessary coordination of wind-up, stride, distribution of the weight at the proper point, and follow-through.

Part Three

OFF THE MOUND



1. Signals and Teamplay

SIGNALS play an important part in modern baseball. By means of them the catcher is able to direct his team during a game. Many elaborate systems are constantly being devised to convey information and at the same time keep it from reaching the opposing nine, and some teams make a systematic attempt to discover the signals of their rivals.

Working with Your Catcher

It is the catcher's job to direct his team during a game and to signal for the kind of ball wanted on each pitch. To do that, he must know the opposing batters and their weaknesses at the plate. If you, as pitcher, know your batters, too, it will make this teamwork easy, for I cannot stress too strongly the necessity of studying the opposing hitters.

The catcher's signals are important to the rest of your team, as well as to you, the pitcher. By knowing what ball is to be pitched, your infielders are set to get the jump on the ball, as the tendency of the average



Catcher strives to screen his signals to the pitcher from the opposing team. A prearranged set of switch signals can be brought into play at a sign from pitcher.

batter is to pull the curve and to hit behind the fast one.

In professional baseball every catcher uses several sets of signals. He usually switches whenever a base runner reaches second, for the runner is in a position to see the catcher's signals. This is where a complicated set of signals comes into play.. For example, when there is no runner on second base, the following set of signals is often used. The flat hand calls for the fast ball, the index finger for the curve ball, the little finger for the change-of-pace, and the thumb for the pitch-out.

When there is a runner on second, a combination of signals is used. Three or four signals are given in rapid succession in order to deceive the base runner on second, though only one sign in each series of signals calls for the pitch; the others are false. For this purpose, these signals can be used: one finger for the fast ball; two fingers for the curve ball; three fingers for a change-of-pace; and moving all of the fingers for the pitch-out.

The right hand across the knee is frequently used

for the switch sign, which means that a different order of signals is to be used. If the first signal in the series is being used, the switch signal would then change over to the second sign given, then to the third, and back again to the first. You may work out other sets of combinations with your catcher, but make sure that there is a perfect understanding between you and your infielders.

Battery and Other Signals

Signs are used in every stratum of baseball, but in the major leagues they are more complicated and intricate, and include many besides pitching instructions. Pitching signs are flashed in series as I have pointed out, and observers on the opposing team are faced with the task of learning which signal is the real one, if they are trying to "steal" them. The signs are changed frequently, and in addition many deceptions are practiced to throw the enemy off the trail. By simple, unobtrusive actions the signals may be reversed, changed, or checked.

Some clubs make a systematic effort to learn the signals of their opponents, starting with the opening game of the season. A runner who reaches second base observes closely the signals given by the opposing catcher, then flashes to his own coach what the pitch will be. The coach, in turn, communicates this information to the batter, who prepares to get set for a curve or fast ball, as the case may be. That is why, to offset this strategy, some teams switch signals when a runner reaches second.

On the batter's first trip to second base, the first sign in a series may be the correct one, while later in the game it may be the second or third one. Or an

entirely new set of signals may be introduced between pitcher and catcher, with the finger movements only a ruse, and the real message being conveyed by the backstop placing his glove against the knee, or touching his cap or another part of his uniform.

When he had a runner on second base and there was danger of the batter being tipped off, Jimmy Ring, right-handed pitching star for the Philadelphia Nationals several years ago, would take the sign from his catcher, nod in approval, and step on the mound. When he dragged his hand across his pants, it was an action reversing the signal given by the catcher. If he did not touch his clothing, the signal stood. Similar tricks are used by other hurlers.

Coach's Signals

When men were sent down to the base line in the early days, there was no thought of using them for giving signals or directing play. Their job was to heckle the opposition. Today, many coaches on the third-base line have become clever in interpreting the mannerisms of pitchers on the mound. They have found, for instance, that some assume different facial expressions or other actions for each ball pitched.

Del Baker, now manager of the Detroit Tigers, has been noted for years as an expert sign-stealer. Mervyn Shea, Detroit coach, remained in the majors more through his cleverness in decoding enemy signals than for his mechanical ability as a catcher.

To inform the first or third baseman what the next pitch is likely to be, the second baseman or shortstop who catches the signal uses key words. If the shortstop wants to say that the next ball is to be a curve, he usually will shout something like, "Come on,

Charlie," the "C" meaning curve. If a fast ball is on tap, his remark may be "The old fight in there," "f" being the tip-off on the fast ball.

To relay information to the batter, the most common system is to call the hitter by his first name to indicate a curve and by his last name to signify a fast ball. When a batter has been fooled a few times, however, he is reluctant to take any more tips. If he is set for a curve and a fast ball is dished up, he is likely to be carried from the field on a stretcher because he waited for the curve to break.

Normally; everyone on the field is informed of the catcher's signal. This enables the team to set its defense. One method is to have the shortstop take the signal from the catcher and pass it along to the outfielders by holding his hand behind his back. The value of a properly interpreted signal is obvious. Usually the right-handed batter will hit a curve to left field and a fast ball into the right-field sector. A curve ball thrown to a left-hand batter generally will be hit to right field and a fast ball to left field.

With such information the outfielders can start fast in the direction to which the ball is likely to be hit, and at the crack of the bat they can be in position ready to field it.

Pitchers who get into organized baseball are told the batting habits of opposing hitters in clubhouse discussions before each game or series. Tentative decisions are made to pitch to each player according to his batting weakness. Thus, when a team takes the field, both infielders and outfielders have a general idea on how to play each batter, because they know the type of pitch that he is likely to receive.

With the advent of the lively ball, teams have abandoned the system of playing for one run, and in-

stead have adopted the big inning. As a result, the sacrifice is not used so much as formerly. It still finds favor, however, when a game is close and has gone beyond the sixth inning. This is the time when the pitcher must be particularly wide-awake as to his fielding assignments.

Some teams, with a star pitcher in the line-up, will even play for one run early in the game, figuring (and usually correctly) that two or three runs will suffice to win the contest.

When a hitter gets on first with none out or there are runners on first and second with none out, the stage is set for the sacrifice play. The batter wants to know as he approaches the plate whether the manager wants him to bunt or hit. The answer is given in a sign, of which there are an untold number. For example, if the manager stands with his arms at his sides, he may indicate to the batter that he is to hit. If, however, he touches his hands together, it is a sign to bunt the ball.

In this emergency, the pitcher and catcher know what to do. When a bunt is anticipated, the fast-ball pitch is thrown high, because it is more difficult to bunt a fast ball successfully than a low pitch. The pitcher must also be ready to pounce on the bunted ball and make the most advantageous play. I shall discuss this later.

Hit-and-Run

Perhaps the greatest offensive play in baseball is the hit-and-run. It is generally used when the batter has the pitcher in a hole and runners are on first, on first and second, or on first and third with less than two out. A team usually does not use the hit-and-run

unless it is in the lead or not more than two runs behind its opponents.

Managers allow certain batters to put on this play and prohibit others from using it. A player is considered a good hit-and-run performer if he can hit behind the runner. This means that if there is a man on first, a batter who might normally hit the ball into left field must clout it into right field.

In such a situation, the pitcher has two chances. His catcher, sensing the hit-and-run, or tipped off to it by an alert teammate or the batter, may order a pitch-out. The base-runner is away from first with the pitch, but a good throw from the catcher stands an excellent chance of getting him at second base. Or the pitcher may keep the ball in close, making it difficult for the right-hand batter to punch the ball into right field.

The Squeeze

Another play for which the pitcher—and catcher, too—must always be on guard is the squeeze, one of baseball's most spectacular plays. Its dramatic touch is heightened by the fact that the outcome of the game usually depends upon its success or failure. It is rarely used except with a runner on third and one out when hits have been scarce and the tying or winning run is only one base away from home plate.

In the squeeze play, the batter, after giving the runner the prearranged signal, puts down a bunt, and the runner breaks for home. This maneuver may be divided into two classes, the safety and the "suicide."

In the safety type, the opposing infield is usually playing back and the runner takes a big lead off third, but doesn't start for home until he sees that the ball has been bunted.

In the "suicide squeeze," the infield is playing in close and the runner breaks for the plate at the start of the pitch. If the ball is bunted down the first- or third-base line (a roller too far for the catcher to get and too close to the base line for the pitcher), it is virtually impossible to catch the man at the plate.

Once again, the importance of signal stealing comes to the front. If the enemy's bold move is anticipated, the pitcher will get the signal for the pitch-out and that runner will look foolish as the catcher puts the ball on him for an easy put-out.

2. *Fielding Your Position*

BEING a pitcher and another ballplayer for your team at the same time is of great advantage. By that, I mean knowing how to field your position, trying to improve your batting, and always having in mind where to make the throw should the ball be hit back at you.

Always keep in mind the situation of the game in each inning as to the score, the number of men on bases, and the importance of each run. Having these plays mapped out in advance will be of considerable aid in doing the right thing at the right time. A pitcher has much more to do than just to pitch in order to be a success.

One of the most important things for a pitcher to remember is to get into the habit of breaking in the direction of first base whenever a ball is hit on the ground to his left, meaning, of course, any ball batted in the direction of the first or second baseman. One of the most finished and interesting plays to watch on the diamond is the ground ball fielded by the first baseman with the pitcher covering first and taking the toss from the first baseman for the put-out.

Handling of Bunts

The proper handling of bunts requires a lot of practice, because many pitchers have considerable trouble getting back into fielding position following the delivery of the pitch. Proper pitching balance will help here; learn to adjust your weight in a hurry so as to be ready for any ball hit back through the box, or bunts of every sort to both your left and right.

Your catcher can help considerably by advising you where to make the throw. Your third baseman can do the same thing. Remember that the bunt down the third-base line must be fielded without loss of time. Often it is necessary to make this particular play with the bare hand alone, getting rid of the ball immediately. Be sure to find the player taking the throw before letting go of the ball.

The Fielding of Bunts

On bunts down the first-base line, or drag bunts between the pitcher and first base, the gloved hand

The pitcher must have the jump on the batter to cover first base effectively.



may be used as a scoop-shovel when fielding the ball bunted in this direction. An underhand toss should be used in getting the ball away to the first baseman. Remember that it is important and safe to be as close as possible to the first baseman before you throw the ball. You accomplish this by continuing toward first base after you have fielded the ball until it is time for you to make the throw.

Whenever you make the underhand toss on such a play, do not hesitate to put something on the ball, keeping it up where the first baseman can see it.

Covering First Base

Getting the jump on the batter when the pitcher finds it necessary to cover first base is like getting the first pitch over for a strike. Many ballgames are lost each season because of failure of the pitcher to cover first base in time.

There are two directions in which you can leave the pitching mound when going to cover first base. Most pitchers seem to agree that the simplest manner in which to handle a throw coming from the first baseman is to start toward the first-base foul line about ten feet inside the home-plate side of first base, remaining just inside fair territory and taking the throw from the first baseman while running along the baseline in this manner.

The ball should always be tossed out in front of the pitcher covering the bag and thrown at a height between the belt and the shoulder. This gives the pitcher making the put-out the opportunity to view both the bag and the ball without much trouble.

Should the ground ball be hit to the right of the first baseman in the direction of second base, the

throw is much easier to handle by coming up the base line to make the put-out in the above manner.

However, you may also run almost diagonally across the diamond in a direct line toward first base to receive the throw from the first baseman in the case of ground balls batted either to his left or directly at the first baseman in his regular playing position.

Analyzing these two methods of covering first base, they come simply to this: When running along the base line for the toss from the first baseman, remain inside the playing field. When you break on the more direct line from the pitching mound to cover first base, you may either remain in the diamond running out toward right field or cross the base into foul territory after making the put-out. It is well to remember that this play is accomplished successfully only after constant practice, no matter which method you decide to use.

Backing Up Bases

Backing up third base and the home plate are part of a pitcher's work in a ball game. Don't get in the habit of standing in the center of the diamond when a play is on at some base; you can be of valuable aid in backing up such plays. In all these plays, do not get too close behind the man making the play at the bag. Twenty or thirty feet behind the play will place you in a position to stop a lot of throws which get away from your teammates. Bad bounds, throws that deflect off the base runner, and balls that get through the fielder often occur in a ballgame and you should be there to stop them and prevent base-runners from taking extra bases.

3. *Holding Runners at Base*

HOLDING a runner close to his base is absolutely necessary in order to win ball-games. Good base-runners watch every move made by the pitcher, trying to detect some little flaw in delivery, or some habit which will tip the runner off when the pitcher is going to throw to the plate.

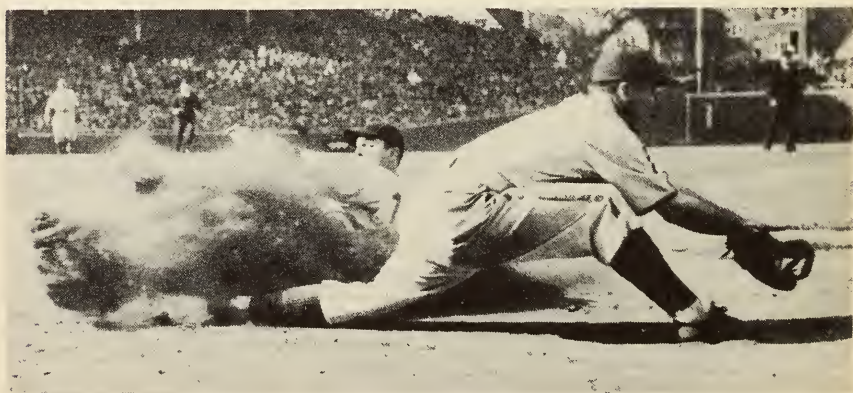
In professional baseball there are usually two or three players on each club who are proficient at stealing bases. These players in particular are watched carefully by the pitcher. It is a good thing to know at the beginning the proper position of arms, feet, and head for the right move to the bases. Whenever a fast man is on first base, not only make sure to watch him closely, but make several throws to the base after him, especially when the game is close and there are one or two men out. Experience has shown that the more you throw after the runner, the less he is likely to attempt to steal, if for no other reason than that sliding back into the bag to avoid being tagged tends to take something out of his base-stealing ambitions and discourage too frequent attempts.

Holding Runner on First Base

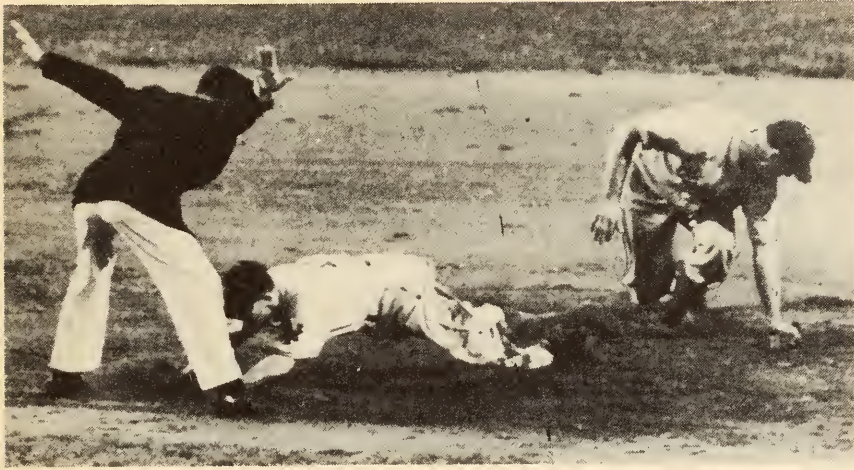
Being able to hold base-runners close to the bag is a necessary asset for any first-class pitcher. With a runner on first base, watch the lead of the base-runner carefully, throwing over after him the moment he makes a step or leans towards second base, once he has taken a commanding lead.

The pitcher coming to rest with his arms at pitching position should roll his eyes (not his head) in the direction of first base, glancing out the corners of the eyes without moving his head. Moving the head back and forth will tend to create a habit whereby a base-runner will be able to pick the last move of the head and be on his way to second base safely.

Once you have reached your proper pitching position after taking the signal from your catcher, either pitch to the plate from that position or make a hurried snap throw to first base after the runner, endeavoring to keep the throw on the inside of the bag a foot or two from the ground so that your first baseman can make an easy tag.



The alert pitcher finds that a number of throws after a runner on first to make him slide back will help to discourage base-stealing ambitions.



Accurate throwing is vital for a put-out. This runner was safe because man covering second couldn't reach the base as he took the throw.

Quick action is necessary, getting rid of the ball in a hurry. Make sure that your stride is in the direction of first base when you make the throw, otherwise you will commit a balk, which according to the rules permits base-runners to advance.

Holding Runner on Second Base

On an attempt to pick a runner off second base, work out some signal with both your shortstop and your second baseman. Most of the right-hand pitchers pivot to the left when making such a throw and left-hand pitchers pivot to their right. However, there are a few major league pitchers who make this play in the opposite manner in respect to the pivot and throw.

On this play you usually have a moving target since either the shortstop or second baseman must take the throw on the run. It is important to throw the ball a few feet ahead of the man taking the throw, at the same time making sure to keep the throw low and

on the inside of the bag so that the fielder may make his tag in the same motion as the catch.

Being able to pick a runner off second base is about the most difficult play in the game, and requires much practice and coaching, along with the cooperation of a teammate at shortstop or second base.

4. *In Conclusion*

JUST as competition grows keener in the business world, so it has in sports. In my capacity as promotional director of the American League, I keep in close touch with the trends in baseball throughout the country. I have made many surveys that have produced astounding facts.

There are approximately 7,000,000 amateur and semiprofessional baseball players in the United States. Three million of this number are registered players.

Five hundred thousand boys under the age of 17 competed in the American Legion tournament in 1940. One thousand teams in the State of Ohio alone entered in this tournament.

The National Semi-Pro Baseball Congress has broadened the stature of semiprofessional baseball. It is now conducted along lines modeled after professional baseball. State champions that compete in the national finals in Wichita each Fall are culled from an original entry list of 20,000 teams.

This year more than forty minor leagues are in operation; 437 colleges and more than 10,000 high

schools are playing baseball. The sport is growing in the colleges, and it has received a tremendous impetus in high schools.

The baseball alarmists have been silenced—those pessimists who used to wonder what would happen to the game when the current crop of stars wore out. Well, nothing happened—except possibly a brighter crop of stars. So, you lads who are now shaping baseball careers should keep in mind that the competition is keen and that you must learn to play the game for all you are worth.

Certain fundamentals necessary for successful pitching have now been brought to your attention for the first time. Only through more than six years of motion picture work with the stars of the big league has this been made possible. The slow-motion camera and the help of these pitching stars have really told the story. To both the camera and these players I am deeply appreciative for this help.

It is my sincere hope that this book of pitching advice will at least play some small part in the development of many of the future pitching stars of baseball, a great game for fans and players alike.

BASEBALL TALK

backstop. Another name for the catcher, also the name for a wooden shield which prevents the ball from rolling more than a certain distance back of home plate if the catcher fails to hold it.

balk. Any motion made by the pitcher while in position to deliver the ball to the batter without delivering it.

base level. Base lines or paths: Alleys specifically marked from base to base along which the runners must progress.

battery. Pitcher and catcher.

bunt. Tapping the ball to the infield.

change-of-pace. Skill of pitcher in first using a fast throw and then a slow one, or reversing this method, the object being to delude the batter.

curve ball. Curve: Peculiar twist which the pitcher places on the ball causing it to deviate from a straight line when on its way to the batter.

diamond. Rectangular space in which game is played.

double play. Successful attempt of fielders to retire two runners in succession before the ball is returned to the pitcher to be delivered to a succeeding batter.

drag bunt. A left-hand batter in motion as he bunts the ball down the first-base line.

drawn game. Tie game where scores are equal.

error. A misplay of performance but not involving bad judgment.

foul ball. A ball which is outside of the limits of the regularly outlined fair field.

foul strike. Any foul ball which is batted before the batter has two strikes; in other words, a strike is called on any foul ball until the batter has had the second strike, then he may foul any number of times.

foul tip. A pitched ball which is merely touched by the bat and proceeds on its flight without ascending into the air or dropping immediately to the ground.

fungo. A long fly high in the air; particularly, in practice, a fly hit from a ball tossed in the air by the batter.

hit. Hit safely: Batted the ball where no fielder could stop or catch it, or batted the ball so hard that it was impossible for the fielder to hold the ball.

hit-and-run. A play by which the batter attempts to bat the ball as a runner starts from a certain base, both batter and fielder secretly denoting their intention so that the play may be uniform.

home run. A long and hard hit by which the batter is able to make the circuit of all of the bases without being put out.

infield. The space which is enclosed by the base lines.

inning. When both teams have had a full term in the field and a full term at bat.

knuckle ball. A sharp breaking pitch where the ball does not revolve.

lively ball. Base ball in use today, sometimes termed a rabbit ball.

mound. Another name for the pitcher's station.

out. A perfect play which prevents a runner from advancing further—three outs retire the side at bat.

outfield. All the space behind the infield in fair ground.

overhand. Overhand delivery; when the pitcher pitches the ball to the batter and his arm passes over his shoulder or at an angle with his shoulder.

pepper game. Several players and one batter engaged in practice bunting game.

pitch out. A deliberate waste ball to break up strategy of the opposing team.

plate. Another term for home base.

run. Credit given to a runner for each time that he makes the circuit of the bases without being retired and before three men have been put out.

sacrifice. Batter's deliberate attempt to advance a runner by retiring himself.

safety. Another term for a safe hit.

seventh inning stretch. Good luck for the home team.

shortstop. The player who plays short field.

side arm delivery. When the pitcher pitches the ball without raising his arm above his shoulder.

squeeze. Squeeze play: With a runner on third and none out or not more than one out a bunt by the batter to assist the runner to score.

strike. Any pitched ball over any part of the plate between the batter's shoulder and his knee. The first two foul balls batted by the batter.

underhand. When the pitcher pitches the ball to the batter and his arm passes below his hip.

1-5-63



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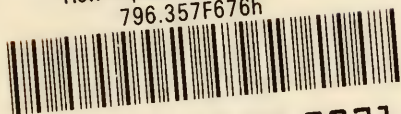
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